SHUTTLECOCK
music magazine
ISSUE 3 JUNE 2021 FREE
MY FAVORITE MERCH: MATTHEW RYAN (P.S.Y.W.A.R.)
ARTIST Q & A: FLORA
RACHEL CION

CONCERT CALENDAR

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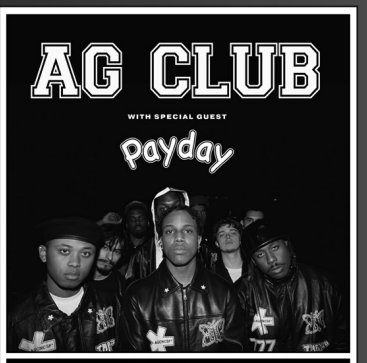
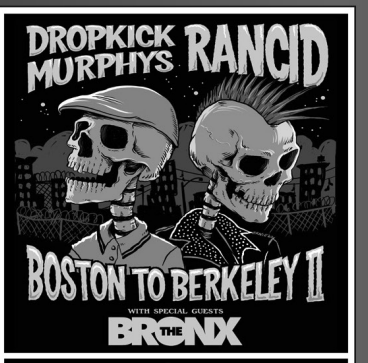


AUG. 5
RECORD BAR



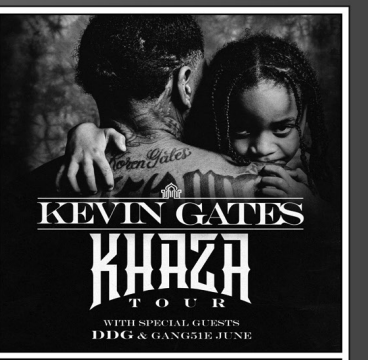
AUG. 11
GRINDERS KC

SEPT. 12
LIBERTY HALL

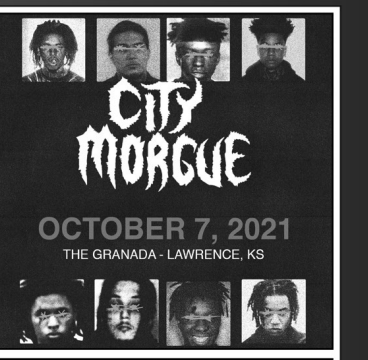
SEPT. 14
THE BOTTLENECK

SEPT. 18
THE GRANADA

SEPT. 29
LIBERTY HALL



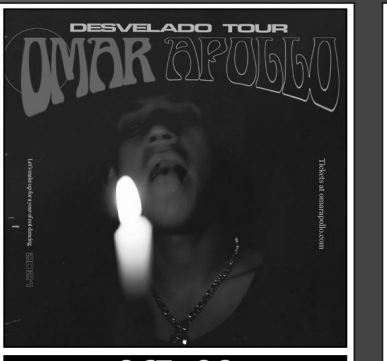
SEPT. 29
UPTOWN THEATER



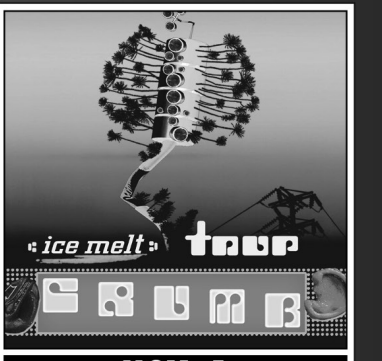
OCT. 7
THE GRANADA

OCT. 7
UPTOWN THEATER

OCT. 9
JAPANESE BREAKFAST



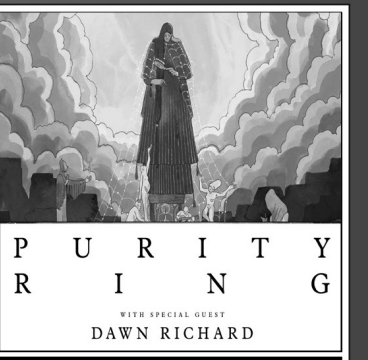
OCT. 29
LIBERTY HALL



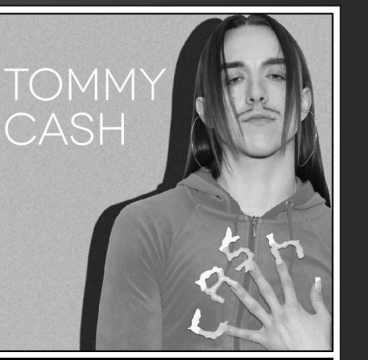
NOV. 1
THE GRANADA

NOV. 13
THE BOTTLENECK

NOV. 18
THE GRANADA



NOV. 30
THE GRANADA



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BY AARON RHODES

FLORA

Flora Billen has been having an interesting year. In addition to surviving eighth grade -- no easy task, COVID era or not -- she also released her first EP as a singer-songwriter. Keep Calling features five songs of bright, infectious, and occasionally angsty indie rock that combine teen bedroom pop charm with rock studio know-how. The know-how comes courtesy of her father Dan Billen, known for his time in the band The Billions and his work at Primary Color Music, the commercial music company owned by his brother Sam. I visited Flora and Dan at The Farmhouse Studio (another part of the family operation) just outside Lawrence, Kansas to talk about Flora's big debut.

So you'd been playing violin and piano actively up until recently, but now you're working more with guitar and bass. What led to that?
FB: Well, actually, I find bass and guitar more easy than what I was taught in lessons, but my grandpa taught me how to play guitar mostly, and my dad, so I thought that was really easier than piano and violin.

Are there other instruments that you still want to try? Or do you feel like you're kinda settling in with the ones you're working with?
FB: I kind of like the ones I play, but I'm thinking of progression because I'm kind of good at drums.

When did you realize that you might want to release your own music?
FB: I've always planned on doing music, since my dad has been in the music career for a really long time along with my brother. So I've kind of always wanted to make music and do stuff like that. But definitely through quarantine is when I started to want to make music.

So what were the first conversations you guys had about releasing music? When did it kind of feel like a real thing that was happening?
FB: Well, actually, me and my dad, we would go on walks to this gas station, which is like a mile away and we would do that just to bond and we started to think about writing music just for fun. And then once my first song was recorded and once I heard it, I knew it was like really good.

Yeah, hearing your first song recorded always seems to bring out a lot of feelings.
DB: Yeah, it was just all in theory until we did that. It was kinda like, "I hope this works."

You guys had said that you only wrote and recorded a song every month or two. Was that pacing kind of intentional?
FB: Yeah, pretty much.

DB: Yeah, especially since it was during school, too. So now that we have the summer, we're gonna try to hit it really hard and record an album this summer together. My goal is to try to have Flora do more, because she was just 13 at the time that we did all this, so I did a lot of the heavy lifting stuff. So even though Flora can do a lot on her own -- like she's used Logic and recorded songs up in her room and they're just so much more raw and maybe, in a lot of ways, better because they're more real, since I do commercial music, mostly, I tend to overthink it, overproduce.

So I'm hoping this summer when we work together

that Flora does more and her brother who's also really awesome, he's 17 and he's a producer too, so I'm hoping that I think once they do more, it's going to sound less like a 43 year-old man who had his hands on it.

That is kind of fun to think about though -- the combination of hi-fi commercial music experience and the rawness of teenage bedroom writing. Were there any moments during the making of *Keep Calling* where you had to tell your dad or brother to step back at all, Flora?
FB: So, well, sometimes when my dad writes songs, they're kind of cringey a little bit, like the lyrics, because he's used to writing [for] commercials. So I'm like, oh, hey, Dad, I think you should change this word to something else. Sometimes it can be cringeworthy.

DB: It's so funny because like, musically, I can pass for younger, you know? I think I can get that '90s sound perfectly, you know, but lyrically, it's just so hard for me. It's so embarrassing to admit, but there's so many times when I help Flora write these songs, some of these lyrics I would write just based on our conversations and she would just say, "No, there is no way," and I'd be like, oh my gosh -- as you get older, you're blind to it. So if there's anything cringey on there, it's my fault.

I'm guessing Flora and Isaac are helpful for that when you're writing your commercial music, too.
DB: Yeah, Flora and Isaac, they have to come in and bail me out a lot, especially if I get assigned hip-hop. Because we do all different genres for commercial music. So they'll assign hip-hop to me and I'm like, oh my gosh, I just cannot. So I have to have my kids come help me make it sound real.

Was it kind of difficult at all to be open and vulnerable about the lyrics for these songs since you were working on them with your family?
FB: Yeah, it's hard when people ask me what the songs are about, because it could be about so many other things. It's just a lot of things. The songs mean a lot of things.

Between the two of you, what taste in music do you have that overlaps, and then what's different?
FB: Well, yeah, my dad, kind of the indie rock and I want to go for lo-fi sometimes. So maybe in the future I can make more lo-fi vibes and then he can still stick with indie rock.

DB: From my perspective, a lot of stuff Flora listens to, it's like they're not even on the grid, like it's just all over the place, but it sounds so good. But anytime I've ever tried to fix something that's lo-fi and just like real off the cuff, it is almost impossible for me because I'm like a perfectionist, everything has to be quantized and everything and so that's the thing I was talking about earlier, I just have to like pass the baton and not be that. But I think a lot of stuff Flora listens to is just way more raw and almost feels unscripted. Which is the opposite. Like, I listen to a lot of stuff that's super tight.

I like the appearances of the rotary phone in the album art and the music video. What inspired the visual aesthetics for *Keep Calling*?
FB: My music is almost like '90s vibes, '80s vibes -- mostly '90s -- so we were trying to go for that theme. My recent music video was kind of like '60s a little bit because it was shot on 8mm film.

DB: And we filmed it all out here. So that's all the farm stuff you see is like all these barns and stuff. Yeah, but it's funny if you look, the aesthetic of the visuals have changed as Flora has grown over the year, because when we started, like I said, she was 13, she just graduated eighth grade last week. And it is crazy how when you're at this age, you grow warp speed. So when I would say when we recorded "Keep Calling," Flora was a little girl, she was a little girl. And then when we recorded the last song, "No One Asked," she was like a different person, like an older teenager. And so when you look at even the visuals and the pictures on Instagram, everything starts kind of pink and like real little girly, and then in just a year, and then it's just getting a little more, I don't know what you'd call it, like, grungy or something. I don't know, it's just so crazy that we captured this at this age.

The zine you made to go with the EP mentions your interest in illustration. You did some work on the album artwork, right?
FB: Actually, my dad wanted me to write out different letters to see which one fit [for my name on the cover], so I just drew a bunch of different fonts. I think we both drew a bunch of different fonts and eventually we chose one we're like, oh, yeah, that one fits perfectly.

Are there any other illustration projects you kind hope to do in the future?
FB: Well, for a while I was doing portraits of people, just for practice for illustration. That went pretty well, but school started, so then I lost track of that. But I think I'm gonna get into that again.

DB: But she's really good at comic strips. Like I used to try. I'm an illustrator, too, I used to try to do comic strips and they're just impossible because you have to have the punchline at the end and just the way it's set up and she's been doing that, like, since you were really little, she has a knack for like setting up the story. So on the next zine, we're working on it now, we're gonna have more for comic strips in there.

Is it ever stressful juggling a bunch of different creative outlets like that?
FB: Illustration is kind of like a hobby for me, but I think in the future I want it to become more professional. I might take college classes on illustration or graphic design. But for now, my priority is music.

Do you hope to be playing live here soon? Getting a band together?
FB: I was hoping to get a band, but so far, no one that I know is good at playing instruments that are in the kind of style I do. But I'm really hoping to have concerts and stuff once COVID-19 has gone away.

And what should people expect as far as the full-length album you mentioned?
FB: Well, I think since I'm gonna be more involved, it might change slightly, but I don't really know yet how it's gonna change. But I think we'll see how it changes.

DB: Yeah and we have like a couple horn players lined up. So I want to at least, you know, me injecting myself again, but I want to have more real horns and stuff on it. I think that'd be really cool. Like, have you listened to Andy Shauf? He always has this horn section that comes in. It just sounds so awesome. So I'm hoping to maybe in a lot of these upcoming songs, have some real horn players in there and hopefully do more things so the whole thing is just more consistent, like tighten it down. Because this one, as you know, it was like every couple months, it was just kind of like a whole new project. Hopefully this one we get it all where it just sounds a lot more consistent.

PHOTOS BY AARON RHODES

Listen to Keep Calling at FloraFromKansas.Bandcamp.com or on digital streaming platforms.

To discover more new music, local and beyond, listen to 90.9 The Bridge and visit their website at Bridge909.org.

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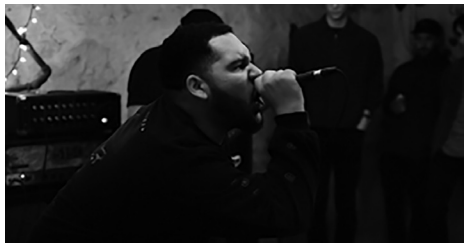
RECENTLY ON THE SITE

BY AARON RHODES

P.S.Y.W.A.R. - 2021 DEMO



Crybabies, posers, and bad faith moralizers beware: this demo ain't for you. In six short minutes, P.S.Y.W.A.R. hammers out four tracks of militant hardcore punk and sets the bar for 2021 demos at an exceptional height. The band features members from both Kansas City and Denver favorites Devil's Den, Reality Complex, and Combat Force, so of course none of this is really a surprise. Though its Kansas City members Matthew Ryan and Max Chaney come from backgrounds of capital-H hardcore, there are no galloping two-step parts to be found here -- just straight-ahead, one-two-one-two bangers, meaning this demo could easily be enjoyed by pogo-and-slam punks here and across America whenever they do decide to hit the road. Ryan's vocals sound like those of a drill sergeant from hell and his band sounds like they're prepared to execute his commands posthaste. No dodging this draft.

PHOTO BY AARON RHODES

LAAEE UZUMAK! - "B!G C4P"

Laaee Uzumak! does not bullshit, mince words, or equivocate. The Kansas City rapper's last single, "Yes!" was by no means lackadaisical, but her most recent drop, "B!G C4P," is arguably even more straightforward and confrontational. I wouldn't want to be on the other end of things when Laaee and her gang of girls are shouting "y'all n***** punks, losers, puny!" *Uzumak! Tape Vol. 1* is among my most anticipated local projects right now.

PHOTO BY KREATIVE CHILD

DREAMGIRL - "SOMETIMES"

Few bands can craft a breezy indie rock love song like Dreamgirl. The group had been picking up steam and gaining some national attention following its 2018 self-titled LP and the singles that surrounded it, but it seems as though the pandemic may have put that momentum on pause. Thankfully, two new singles, "All U Wanna Do Is Dance" back in October, and "Sometimes" last month, have emerged and pick up right where the Kansas City crew left off. Grab your favorite ballcap, crack open a cold one, and enjoy this tune on your front porch ASAP.

PHOTO BY ANNA SELLE

PERFUME - "MADONNA"

How much fuzz can you take? Allow Perfume to help you find the answer to that question. The Kansas City alt-rock trio has released their debut EP, *Charlie's Angels*, on June 18 and we premiered the music video for its single "Madonna." Directed by Brennan Pittman, the video shows the band jamming the song at home, walls adorned with posters from the '90s bands they revere, and riding around town together, fisheye antics abound. It's not hard to get lost in this dreamy, kaleidoscopic number.

PHOTO BY IAN PITTMAN

PODCAST: DYLAN PYLES

Dylan Pyles is a singer-songwriter and musician who has been active in Kansas City's music scene for over a decade now. He's also a manager at Mills Record Company and a co-owner of the book store Wise Blood. On this episode of the podcast we talked about Record Store Day this year and last, the evolution of Wise Blood over the past few years, Pyles' introduction to music as a child, his years attending Cornerstone Festival in Illinois, his former bands, joining the hardcore band Canyons, his many solo releases, and his new album *A Train Called Solitude*, out now via Manor Records.

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MY FAVORITE MERCH

BY AARON RHODES

MATTHEW RYAN

Matthew Ryan has been a familiar face at Kansas City hardcore shows for the last couple years since his move here from Leavenworth, Kansas. Following the end of a short lived pre-pandemic band, Ryan and Max Chaney from Devil's Den linked up with a couple Denver pals to start P.S.Y.W.A.R. That band's demo is one of the hardest you'll hear all year and I cannot wait to see the band live. Read below about a few favorites from his merch collection.

So what was the first piece of merch you remember being excited to own?
I think it was like 2009 or 2010 or whenever Lil Wayne went to jail, it was like a Free Weezy shirt at Hot Topic, and I was like, damn, that shit's sick. I got my grandma to get it for me. I had it for a few years. I don't know what happened to it. I wasn't allowed to wear it at school for some reason, but I tried to a couple times.

It's fucked up that they would put you down like that.
It was any fucking merch that I got. Like I had a blue Odd Future [shirt] with the OFW shit on it and I wore that and they looked it up and they were like, "This is a gang who has some weird fucking songs and you can't wear that here. You have to turn it inside out." It sucked man, I wasn't able to wear that shit ever.

They didn't wanna hear "kill people, burn shit, fuck school" I guess.
That was actually what they referenced! The song "Radicals," they were like, "Yeah, you can't do that. That's dangerous and harmful." But then I wore my Earl shirt and then I just got a bunch of weird looks.

That's Leavenworth I guess.
Yeah. I could never wear any cool shit.

Sounds like the prison town mentality might seep into the rest of life there, huh?
For real dude. My aunt had this boyfriend who went to jail and stayed with us for a few days and he left his jail sweats there and I tried to wear those to school [laughs]. They're like, "Dude, what the fuck is wrong with you? Why do we have to tell you to not wear this shit?" [laughs] It's like, man, I'm just trying to fucking live out here.

It's like, "Yeah, I want everyone to know I'm tough. Maybe I've been to jail!"
I'm wearing these big-ass sweatpants. Obviously I don't give a fuck [laughs].

Do you think you could describe to me your personal style? Or are there any characteristics or types of clothing in general that always attract you?
Usually just black pants and whatever t-shirt. I have a couple jackets, like my jean jacket and then I have this black bomber jacket that I wear sometimes, but it's either like t-shirts and black pants or sweatshirts. Sometimes baggy. I really like RealTree. RealTree's like my favorite shit. I've got a couple longsleeves and a jacket and shit. But yeah, I don't know. I'm usually wearing a bootleg of some sort or just a music t-shirt or a movie t-shirt or something.

Were there or are there any people that you've ever tried to emulate in your own style or just been a big fan of in that way?
Yeah, honestly the first time I saw Cadaver Dog I was like damn, he's wearing the small beanie and he's got the Vans, those are fuckin' tight. For a while like I thought the Carhartt shit was cool, but it's really fuckin' played out now. I liked the vintage Carhartt and stuff like that, but Carhartt's mad expensive now and so are Dickies. It's weird. I like to think that some people here have some good style, but then there's some people that I see wearing some outrageous shit, and I'm like, whatever works for you.

Not quite related to merch, but I think furniture and decor play into a similar sensibility with most people. I know you're a big fan of American Pickers and lots of antique type stuff.
I didn't really have a lot of shit growing up at all. It seems like I always liked my grandparents' stuff, but they were the kinds of people that when it was time to upgrade, they would just kind of throw it away, so there's a lot of cool shit that I've managed to get my hands on. But for the most part, I do have a lot of hand-me-down shit, especially in my kitchen. I have a lot of fucking Pyrex stuff and porcelain bowls and shit. I have the old school Tupperware and shit and I really like that. I've just gotten some cool shit passed on to me.

And whenever I was younger I just used to be obsessed with either dumpster diving, finding shit on the side of the road or going to thrift stores and antique shops and stuff. I tried to get used pants, like secondhand stuff mostly or try to buy stuff from smaller DIY people and that's why I have a lot of good stuff. Plus, old shit is just really expensive. So every once in a while I'll splurge on something that's old, but it's always worth it, you know?

Can you tell me a little about what to expect for P.S.Y.W.A.R. merch?
Yeah, we have a couple ideas, but I think we're going to try and get surplus shirts, army surplus shit probably, screen print over those, have somebody print some shirts secondhand. But yeah, not really too many concrete ideas. We do have a little logo thing that we're thinking about using.

So, shirt number one.

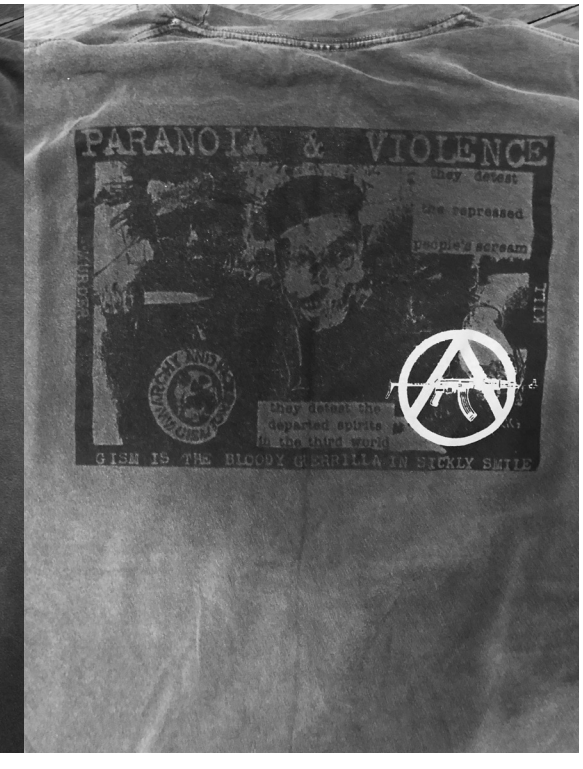
I've got my Comfort Colors G.I.S.M. fuckin' Military Affairs Neurotic shirt. It's got the fuckin' little skull with like a little penis thing, the fuckin' anarchy symbol with the gun. And on the back it just has anarchy and violence and paranoia and violence. But yeah, it's got fucking weird Sakevi art on it. He's the vocalist, he does a lot of the art and shit.

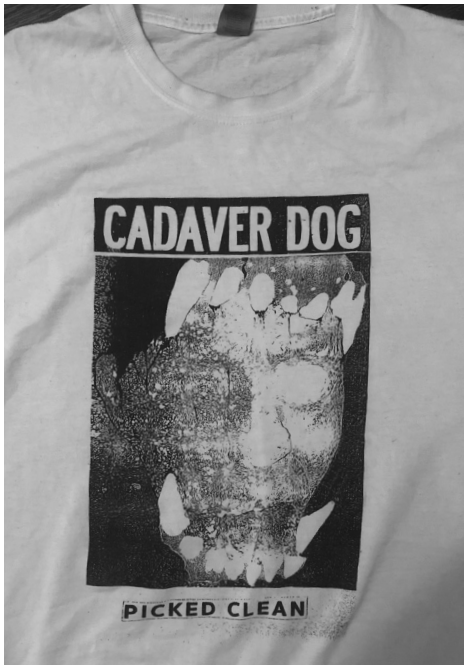
What do you think attracts you to his art style?
It's so weird because like, since they're Japanese, some of their their lyrics are with some broken English and stuff like that and it's like you can tell they're pissed off about like the government and that, but some of the terms they use and the sentences and the lines are just like so vague almost and it's just hard to understand, but I really like the cut-and-paste style of it. And I really like the use of this head diagram with the brain but it's like an enlarged head. And it's just like, I don't know, I really like it. I think it's really cool.

Yeah, now that you mention it, I do really love their use of broken English just because it really captures how dumb and pointless and frustrating all those things are. "Fuck war, fuck government, fuck president, etc." is really as valid as any more nuanced take to me.
Like yeah, just everybody in general, it's like I was telling you earlier, that motherfucker had a flamethrower on a subway and set a businessman on fire for staring at him. He's trying to fucking shoot down airplanes and poison the water at shows and shit. Like, he's just a crazy motherfucker and he beat the fuck out of bootleggers and said he would kill him and straight up like flew here to like be like, "Yo, motherfucker, I will kill you."

Are you afraid you'll be targeted for wearing this shirt, Matthew?
I actually don't wear it that much. Just because every time I do, I get some looks. I have a few shirts that I wear seldomly, like every once in a while, but yeah, I mean, I really love this shirt. I love how faded it is and it's just really comfortable.

I think that's becoming a theme on My Favorite Merch. The cool, edgy shirt that people love that doesn't get worn outside much.





One of my first bootlegs that I got actually was the fucking Nirvana one with the big boobs on and all that shit. I wore that shit a few times. I've worn it to stores and shit. Ian's dad liked it, so that means it's a good shirt, basically [laughs].

Next shirt.
Got my Cadaver Dog shirt. One of the first shirts I got at a show that I was really fucking stoked about. It's got the teeth. I feel like if this was on paper it would look very like Xerox'd, but it's got the skull/face in it.

Last shirt.
That's my Mayhem - Pure Fucking Armageddon shirt with the burning church on it. I pretty much only have bootlegs, not too much vintage shit. If I see something I really like, I'll get it, but they're usually just so expensive now. I got this from Schizoid Unit actually. They got some good shirts, they have a lot of fuckin' designs. And I think that they do a really good job of being simple and it's a pretty basic shirt, but it's really good.

Yeah, I got my Agnostic Front and SS Decontrol tees from there. Great design picks, real clean.
Yeah, I have that [SSD] shirt, too. I got a Celtic Frost and my Bastard shirt from them, too. I actually have two of the same Bastard shirt. But yeah, it is a really good job of sticking to the original. For a while they were only offering like black and white, which is really cool.

Yeah, I feel like some bootleggers try to do a little too much and sometimes it pays off, sometimes it doesn't.
Yeah, they do Gildan ultra cotton and I really like it. They offer fucking Comfort Colors now and I'm excited to get my next shirts from them because you gotta get the Comfort Colors for the big boys.

The G.I.S.M. shirt wasn't from Schizoid Unit, was it?
No, that was actually the people that run Ails And Ills. They have some connection to this punk shop in Mexico and they just found a box of those shirts and the G.I.S.M. hats, but not really sure who made them or where they're from or how old they are, but they just had a limited number and I was just like, damn, that's a fucking really cool shirt.

A mysterious box of bootlegs. I don't know anything about Ails And Ills.
They're really tight. I got my Integrity - Systems Overload shirt from them, which is really fucking cool. Really comfortable shirt. It's one of my favorites and then I have one of the first Morrissey shirts that they did. It's pretty cool.

So that's just another bootleg press run by punk/hardcore people?
Yeah, also they're cool with Dwid from Integrity, so I think that they do most of Integrity's new merch and do a lot of official stuff for them. That Systems Overload shirt was really cool. It's apparently the first time it's been printed since that album came out.

Are there any specific vintage tees or bootlegs that you'd really love to find one day?
Yeah, there's a few things. I really like the old Immortal shit and the old black metal stuff, like the Burzum - Aske shirts and shit. Pretty much just the black metal shit the old death metal shit. I can't really think of any specific designs or anything.

It's funny seeing people randomly deciding to get upset over someone wearing a Burzum shirt every once in a while. Always seems really arbitrary.
Which is fucking crybaby shit. It's like, you don't realize that like Burzum fucking kicks ass. Like, dude, he recorded on the fucking shittiest equipment. He did basically everything by himself, fucking played drums, did vocals, like everything; it sounds really good and I think still really holds up. Even his last album that was just experimental fucking like, not really dungeon synth, but like, just kind of folksy ambient music, it was really fucking good. Like, I don't know, what's that one song? "Gathering Of Herbs?" [Laughs] That song's good as fuck. It's just like what fucking hobbits would listen to if they were in the fucking woods, you know?

So #FreeVarg?
Yeah, I mean no, honestly, no [laughs]. I like Varg though. Yeah, I actually donate money to Varg's YouTube channel. I make sure I support everything on platforms as well [laughs]. Me and him are cool, so I just send him money.

Ian, can I hit your juul?

See full color photos on www.ShuttlecockMusic.com

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Following Aaron Alexander and Spine, KCK's multi-talented Khrystal is the third artist to be featured in one of our artist series t-shirt runs.

The design is a white t-shirt (Gildan Heavy) with the classic Shuttlecock logo on the breast and a black & white photo of Khrystal performing at the West Wyandotte Library in 2018 on the back.

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PHOTOS BY AARON RHODES
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FUCK YOU ATTITUDE

RACHEL CION ON HER NEW COUNTRY-INSPIRED EP AND PANDEMIC ESCAPISM

BY AARON RHODES

"I think what I like about her is just her attitude, which I noticed a lot more when I went back and listened as an adult. She's just so fuck you and she's not even trying to do it; it's just so effortless."

Rachel Cion (short for Cionitti) and I are sitting on a bench outside of Nigro's Western Store on Merriam Lane discussing her renewed passion for the music of country superstar Miranda Lambert. Lambert's solo catalog and that of her group Pistol Annies both served as inspiration for Rachel's most recent EP, *Wanted!* While many suburbanites -- especially those in alternative and indie music circles -- snub their noses at the sounds, sights, and politics of country music, *Wanted!* is decidedly sincere in its homage to the genre, as short or long as Rachel's flirtation with it may end up being.

Earnest as our interest in the western store's culture and wares may have been, we did stick out like sore thumbs as we did some browsing before our interview. Our late May trip to the shop began with the lady at the counter assuring us we didn't need to be wearing our masks inside, as everyone else in the shop went without. We also received a rambling but well-intentioned lecture from a fellow customer about the different cowboy hats we were viewing on the wall and the etiquette that corresponded with each variety -- among other things, the shape of the crease on the top of each hat is important.

The aforementioned *fuck you* attitude that Rachel channels on the song "What You've Done" is aimed at a certain type of guy she and her friends have encountered. "A lot of women I know deal with extremely overconfident men who have accomplished very little compared to those women and I think it's about that toxic masculinity type thing where a certain group of men will expect women to be beautiful, accomplished, intelligent, funny, sexy, and they -- you can't even start a list with them."

It's worth reminding that Rachel and the other members of her band Bigfatcat were adamant about writing and recording their debut EP on their own when it would've been easy enough to ask male peers of theirs for help in making it sound more professional. *Wanted!* was recorded alone in Rachel's room in Lawrence. Like on past releases of hers, she often employs multi-tracked vocals. "I don't like how my voice sounds when it's all isolated," she says. "I also feel like there can never be too [many] harmonies."

Another prominent production decision was her use of MIDI drums. They add a colder feel to the songs, contrasting the warmth of her vocals, but complementing the menace in some of the lyrics. Rachel says she made the choice simply because her drumset was all the way at a parent's house in Johnson County and that she could create slightly more complex rhythms via MIDI. It feels natural, though, given that Rachel posted her earliest songs first on SoundCloud, a platform dominated by hip-hop and other genres that opt for digital production. "I love that someone thinks my inability to play drums ended up adding something cool," she laughs.

While there are some louder, rock-n-roll moments on the EP (Rachel says the pandemic provided her a chance to immerse herself in lots of classic rock for the first time), the delivery of her attitude is often more understated. "There's intimidating someone by being loud and then there's that intimidating where you're being really quiet," she says. It makes sense that Lana Del Rey -- in particular her early *Lizzy Grant* album, which has a bit of a Southern charm to it -- was another main influence on *Wanted!*

"Heist," the EP's closing track, utilizes that quiet-but-cold delivery with precision. Goes the bridge: "I don't like to be the bearer of bad news, except for when I do / I don't like to get red on these shoes, except for when I do."

Though "Heist" and "What You've Done" enter moody territories, the EP isn't all angst. The opening track, "Gunpowder Baby," is a tribute to a fictional femme fatale. It's a noteworthy moment in Rachel's catalog as a singer-songwriter seeing that most of her music thus far has been more or less autobiographical. "I do not have a real life gunpowder baby, sadly, that was totally [a] fictional GF," Rachel laments. "But it was nice to write because it scratched that same itch that watching those badass movies kinda did. That [song] was just born of [really wanting] to write a fictional song."

One of the badass movies in question is *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967) starring Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty as the iconic Depression era outlaw couple. "I like how it looks and not every moment of the movie is that fuck you attitude," Rachel says of the film. "It resolves with [them getting] their retribution 'cause that's what movies had to do at the time, but there are moments of it that felt really carefree and it just played with that idea of danger and exploring that side of people where it's like, maybe people aren't as good as they are."

Rachel says she was attracted to the dark, perilous nature of *Bonnie and Clyde* due to the sheer mundanity of the past year's COVID lockdowns. Evading law enforcement and robbing banks with your significant other is kind of the opposite of sitting on your couch eating fast food and watching Netflix. "I really like songs that are little fictional worlds. Like, worldbuilding," Rachel laughs.

"That's such a nerdy word."

She elaborates, "If you go back and listen to bulk of what I've written, which is only on SoundCloud because I'm embarrassed by it, starting freshman year of high school, I was extremely confessional. It was like my only way of dealing with relationship troubles. So yeah, I was definitely overly confessional; super raw and personal, which is good in some cases, but given the past year, escapism was the one thing that kept me afloat. Escapism through fiction. I've listened to a lot of artists who do that recently, so I just wanted to do that for myself."

She's also a fan of aestheticism -- "cool art for the sake of cool art." And what's a cooler image than a gun-toting outlaw on the run? If there is a cooler image, it might be whichever look, era, or subculture Rachel taps into next. "I don't think I'll ever settle down to a genre or a sound because I get bored too easily, and that's probably a quality of many Gen Z individuals, and I think that's kinda why we're forgoing the idea of genre as it is." Before this do-si-do with country, Rachel has crafted dance pop, indie rock, folk, and a couple sounds in between.

Another thing that allows Rachel to remain untethered to any one style is that she still only views her music as a hobby rather than a possible career. "The fact that people listen is an amazing and unexpected bonus," she says. "I don't really feel the need to find a sound since I'll always just be doing what brings me joy, even if nobody else likes it."

What does Rachel see herself doing for a career? She was very excited to tell me that she's currently double majoring in physics and astronomy (which she assures me is not as impressive as it sounds since most of the courses required for each are the same) with the goal of working a 40/40/20 university job (40% of her time spent as a professor, 40% as a researcher, 20% doing various other department work) studying cosmology (which is similar to astrophysics, but focuses on the scale of entire galaxies). "That's gonna take another 10 years of school, but I like school, so it's fine," she says in a casual tone.

Whether Rachel will become a star or simply continue to study the stars is yet to be determined, but she'll be keeping busy either way. She hopes to recruit a band and play material from *Wanted!* live in the near future. Bigfatcat is also working on a new album to be completed this fall when band member Olivia Markey returns from Washington. Rachel divulges that the BFC LP will feature a lot of pop-punk energy; she's been a huge Paramore fan since she was eight years old and counts herself a fan of Fall Out Boy and Panic! At The Disco. Markey prefers Mark, Tom, and Travis (well, Mark, Matt, and Travis for now I guess).

Rachel Cion is a little bit country, a little bit rock-n-roll, and a little bit of a lot of other good things, too. As Beatty's Clyde Barrow might put it:
Hell, she might be the best damn girl in Kansas.

PHOTOS BY COURTNEY HONORS

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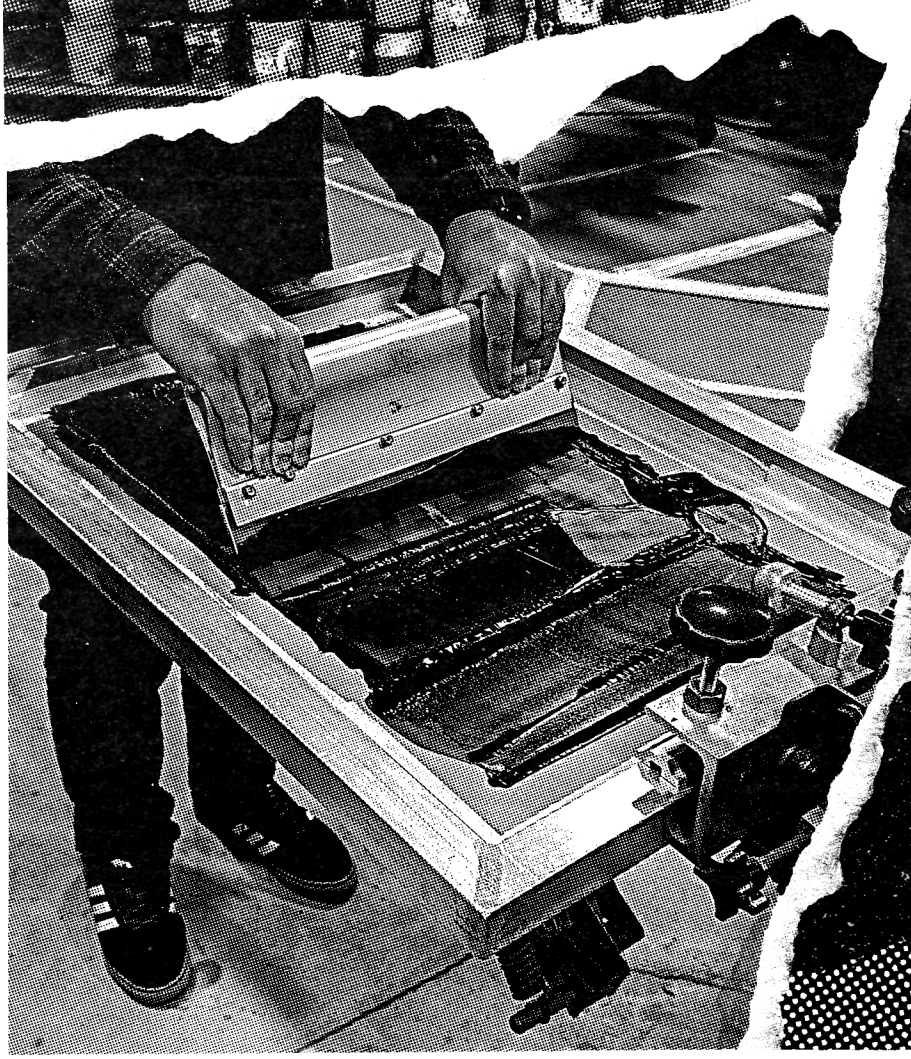

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1

Amira Wang w/ Zajikc, Warner Alexander, Star B, Tr3y Wita 3, and Cashmerexpapi
@ Velvet Freeze (KC)

2

Blues Traveler w/ JJ Grey and Mofro
@ Knuckleheads (KC)

Chess Club w/ Red Kate and Matthew Mulnix
@ Replay Lounge (LFK)

AyEl w/ Jass, Chris Dom$, and G7no
@ Made Mobb (KC)

3

Kansas City's Reggae Music & Jerk Festival
@ Volker Park (KC)

Perfume w/ Big Spin and Altered State
@ The Vinyl Underground at 7th Heaven (KC)

Cheery w/ CS Luxem and The Creepy Jingles
@ Replay Lounge (LFK)

Nuthatch-47 w/ Major Matt Mason USA, All Blood, and Nan & The One Night Stands
@ Lemonad(e) Park (KC)

Stonegood w/ Prismada and Always 420
@ 4016 Washington St. (KC)

4

Shuttlecock Presents: Big Water w/ Valta, Sarin Reaper, and BigSpin
@ The AV Club (KC)

The Roseline w/ Half Tiger Half Bear
@ Replay Lounge (LFK)

Kansas City's Reggae Music & Jerk Festival
@ Volker Park (KC)

Mother America X (ft. AKAMFDM, Collidescope, Bodythrashers, Killus, Ricky Roosevelt CXPA, New Obsession, + more)
@ Private Location (KC)

8

The Black Creatures w/ Adeta Marie and Bad Alaskan
@ The Black Box (KC)

9

Idaho w/ The String and Return & Slights
@ Lemonad(e) Park (KC)

Harper K w/ LK Ultra, Dunes Day, and Daniel Gum
@ White Schoolhouse (LFK)

Concubine w/ This Is My Condition and Tokeback Mountain
@ Replay Lounge (LFK)

The Moose w/ Garst and Dylan Pyles
@ The Rino (KC)

10

Fritz Hutchison w/ Jametatone
@ Raj Ma Hall (KC)

14

Vanity Plates
@ The Mockingbird Lounge (KCK)

16

Kadesh Flow w/ NuBlvckCity and Mensa Deathsquad
@ Lemonad(e) Park (KC)

The Moose w/ LK Ultra and The Headaches
@ Replay Lounge (LFK)

Sarin Reaper w/ Swollen Shut, Ahriman, Pile of Dead Horses, and Contraktor
@ Stray Cat Film Center (KC)

The Bad Ideas w/ Doldrums and Box Knife
@ TBA (KC)

17

Oxford Remedy w/ Quiet Takes and Late Night
@ Replay Lounge (KC)

18

Everclear w/ Living Colour, Hoobastank, and Wheatus
@ Grinders (KC)

21

Radkey w/ DJ Thundercutz
@ recordBar (KC)

Alison Hawkins
@ The Mockingbird Lounge (KCK)

23

Arquesta Del SolSoul w/ Dreamgirl and Blvck Hippie
@ Lemonad(e) Park (KC)

24

Les Izmore & The GOATS w/ Back Alley Brass Band, Sam Wells, and Chalis O'Neal
@ Lemonad(e) Park (KC)

The Grisly Hand
@ The Ship (KC)

Godzillionaire w/ The Soiled Doves and Blood Daubers
@ Replay Lounge (LFK)

27

Lucero
@ Madrid Theatre (KC)

R.A. The Rugged Man w/ A-F-R-O, Reverie, Open Minded, Psychedelic Sidekick, and Statik
@ recordBar (KC)

30

Babyface Ray
@ Blvd Nights (KC)

True Lions w/ Sam Wells and Blue False Indigo
@ The Black Box (KC)

31

Rex Hobart w/ Slim Hanson & The Poor Choices
@ Raj Ma Hall (KC)

BLOGROLL

BY AARON RHODES

Is this media critique? Is it a digest? A roundup, perhaps? Up to you. Here is a bunch of local music media coverage from the last month and my thoughts on it.

Find links to all of the content highlighted here in the online version of this article, which can be found at www.ShuttlecockMusic.com.

VIDEO CONTENT

-Yadda Yadda Live In-Studio with A'Sean and [Walt]
You may recognize A'Sean from the cover story of last month's issue. This studio session hosted by Kansas City hip-hop podcast Yadda Yadda features longtime collaborators A'Sean and [Walt] performing multiple tracks from their recent *Seven Days* EP in a chilled-out, intimate setting which happens to be the studio in which the songs were originally recorded.

-Sight & Sound - Episode 5 - Tha GoonEz
To be transparent, I've been aware of Tha GoonEz as a Kansas City hip-hop/R&B production group for several years now and I know for certain that they've worked on many of my favorite local tracks, but due to 1) the fact that there are four of them, working sometimes in tandem, sometimes solo and 2) the fact that producer credits aren't displayed as prominently as they could be on some releases and platforms, it's been a bit difficult for me to properly track the specifics of their catalog. (It should be noted, however, that they recently updated their website and you can find recent bits of their discography there.)

This video interview covers the basics of their formation and inspirations along with some clips of them working in the studio. Though it doesn't go too deep, it does provide a much-needed public introduction to the group. An interview via Shuttlecock is overdue and I hope to remedy this soon.

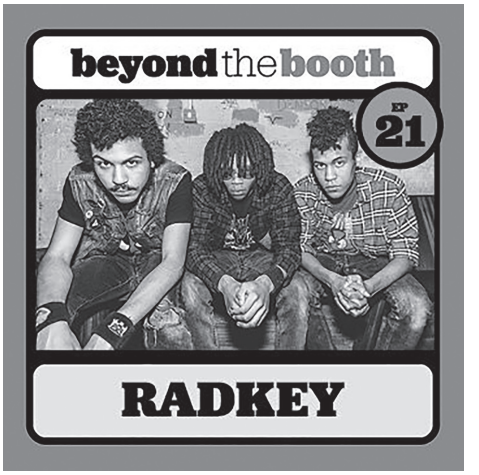
-Coop Sessions with Charlotte Bumgarner and Daniel Gum
I've been informed that Coop Sessions will not be returning to its original chicken coop studio home. Nevertheless, the Coop crew has continued to drop live session gems. Tulsa singer-songwriter Charlotte Bumgarner's session at Deep Space retained the beautiful and delicate simplicity present in her recorded efforts. She deserves national attention yesterday.

Daniel Gum's session took place in the swimming pool room of an abandoned school (is there a name for this kind of room? A swimnasium, perhaps? Sorry.) Like in Bumgarner's session, Gum's recording captures his best qualities. Present are his emotive vocal delivery and weighty, honest style of songwriting.

-Saber Magazine - Artist Profile 003 - Nathaniel Wendt
Nathaniel Wendt has been handling a lot of visual art for releases from A'Sean and his SWAN clothing brand lately. This video profile from Saber digs into Wendt's early inspirations (the Captain Underpants series being chief among them), the characters he first designed as a child, and his day-to-day as an illustrator and his process for collaborations.

READING MATERIAL

-Like Tech N9ne before him, rising rap artist finds he can still call Kansas City home - Kevin Hardy, The Kansas City Star
You may notice that this is the only written piece I've highlighted in this edition of Blogroll. That's not to say that all local music-related articles from the past month have been completely unimportant, but frankly, nothing really grabbed me. And this article's inclusion is only being made to highlight the point that this is the first non-Strange Music related Kansas City Star local hip-hop feature that I can recall since Aaron Randle, Shelly Yang, and Monty Davis' award-winning 2017 locals on the rise feature. Ironically, Tech N9ne is namechecked in the headline of this feature on Suli4Q (though I do realize that it's often the editor deciding the headline, so this might not be on its author Kevin Hardy). Though not much of the small chunk of Suli's catalog I've interacted with has interested me much, he does have a fairly interesting story, particularly the multi-generational aspect, with his father being a member of an old hip-hop group called Islamic Force. I realize of course how small a budget the Star now operates on, but let this be noted as my public plea for more local music coverage in those ever-shrinking pages.



AUDIO CONTENT

-Beyond The Booth with Isaiah Radke
Radkey bassist Isaiah Radke joins Cameron Capers in this brief podcast interview to talk about the sibling punk band's chemistry and facing record industry ignorance and prejudice from their hometown of St. Joseph to the genre's loftiest gatekeepers. They also get into the excitement of being featured in the recent documentary *What Drives Us*, directed by Dave Grohl, and Radkey's upcoming tour dates with Foo Fighters.

-Cabbages with Stik Figa
Cabbages is an independent hip-hop podcast and newsletter/blog created by veteran journalist and critic Gary Suarez. The podcast, co-hosted by Jeffery Laughlin, features rappers and producers as guests, but each episode's discussion focuses instead on one select movie rather than music (for the most part). Enjoy Suarez, Laughlin, and beloved Topeka expat Stik Figa discussing the 2017 stoner comedy *Grow House*.

-Kick City with Gee Watts
Sneakers and NFTs are two things I know little to nothing about, but if either of those are your bag, Kansas City rapper Gee Watts recently guested on the Kick City podcast to talk about them. His recent mixtape, *Mt. IWT*, was released exclusively as an NFT (that I did not manage to get my digital hands on due to poor planning on my part). Hopefully it'll see a wider release in the near future.

-TrueAnon with Donald Morrison
In case you didn't hear about or care to read Donald Morrison's remarkable piece, Who Killed Mac Dre?, that was published on Passion Of The Weiss recently, he guested on Brace Belden (of Warkrime, Maximum Rocknroll, and YPG infamy) and Liz Franczak's podcast to talk about Mac Dre's impact (Brace and Liz both reside in the Bay Area) and recap Morrison's piece.

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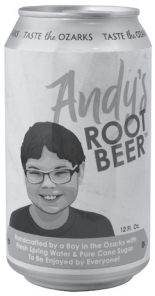
SODA SELECTOR

BY AARON RHODES

It would be difficult to top the seven-soda frenzy that occurred in the previous edition of this column (as much fun as that was), but I think I've got a solid enough lineup to follow. Below are a few new sodas I've tried in the last month, plus a couple I'm on the search for.

The first of these bevs is Mountain Dew's Dew-S-A which I grabbed at some convenience store (maybe Fast Stop, maybe Midtown Market, maybe Shell. Who's to say?) Apparently the flavor was given a limited release back in 2017 and has been revived this summer, possibly in support of Team America as they compete in the Olympics. The games this year stretch from late July through early August, but according to the Mountain Dew Fandom page, this flavor will be gone by June 14. All I'll say is that you're not really missing much here unless you're an extremely devoted Dew-head. The drink is purple and comes with red, white, and blue packaging and apparently mixes three other Dew variants (Voltage, Code Red, and Whiteout) into one bottle. Though it is sweet and no less drinkable than other lesser Dew variants, it's not much to write home about. No one flavor really stands out within the mix. What I am more interested in is procuring these two new Baja Blast variants (Baja Flash and Baja Punch) which are currently being bottled and distributed.

A beverage I'm on the lookout for is Faygo. In particular, the iconic Detroit brand and ICP-backers' new Firework flavor, which allegedly tastes like a bombpop. It sounds like the perfect summertime treat to me! I looked at the Faygo website's tracker and punched in my KC area code and a Johnson County one and neither yielded any results. The only two places I remember seeing Faygo in the metro before are at the Great Mall Of The Great Plains (RIP) as a child and maybe at a BP or Shell station out in Shawnee Mission long ago. I respect this brand and hope they can make for appearances in this column! Tips on this are welcome.



On an indie soda tip, I recently grabbed lunch at the Green Room in Westport -- a tasty frisco melt and some fries -- and had the opportunity to enjoy a can of Andy's root beer, brewed by Pine River Brewing. It's among my favorite root beers I've had as of late -- equally crisp and foamy -- and felt great to sip on a breezy patio afternoon. The can boasts of using no GMO's, fresh spring water, and pure cane sugar. There's also a fun feature about Andy's process on the Pine River website if you care to check it out. He was just 12 years old when he first made it. Salute to all the young soda heads out there -- keep the faith. The Ozarks have something to say.

A company that's been on my radar for two or three months now is called Exotic Pop. From what I can tell, it's a Texas-based company that bottles its own hip-hop themed soda drinks and imports rare/international flavors from other brands. The Hub Smoke Shops in Kansas City have coolers stocked with some of these selections (there is a KC-based distributor that brings them to town, @ExoticPop_KC on Instagram), so I finally stopped by to try one. Over a dozen different rappers, past and present, have their own flavors of Exotic Pop, but I thought there would be no better starting point than Mac Dre's bubble gum thizzle pop. It's a standard but very solid pink bubble gum flavor and it comes in a very stylish bottle featuring the Golden Gate Bridge, a cool car (I know nothing about cars), an illustration of Dre, and a wavy psychedelic backdrop. I might hold on to this bottle as a collectible, as I may with future Exotic Pops I acquire. The perfect combo with a bag of Rap Snacks, yeah?

Lastly, a couple people told me that they were sad that the Sippin' On Some Soda podcast is currently on hiatus. It came down to personnel issues when we went on break earlier this year and while that situation has been resolved, Kirby is in fact moving out of Kansas City sometime in the next month or so. So, to celebrate our short but glorious carbonated pod careers, we've decided we'll be recording a farewell episode sometime in the next month or two before he leaves town. Expect fun guests, a blind taste test challenge, and all the other Sippin' antics you came to love over the first 13 episodes.

P.S. Also, where can I find Pepsi Blue? Never tried it. Thanks!

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Heidi Lynne Gluck - *Pony Show*

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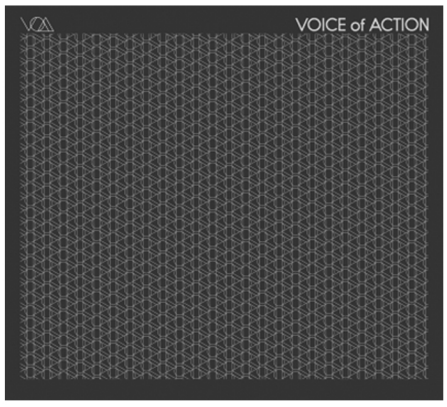
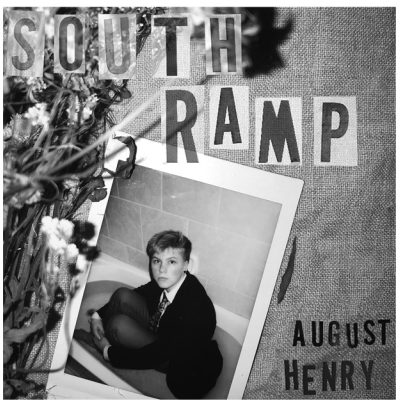


CD/LP/Digital

Chris Cardwell - *Burning Heart*

CD/Digital

August Henry - *South Ramp*



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